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GENERAL AND COMPLETE DISARMAMENT

Letter dated 7 September 1995 from the Permanent Representative of Australia to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to bring to your attention the enclosed statement issued on 6 September 1995 by the Prime Minister of Australia, the Hon. P. J. Keating, M.P., on the first French nuclear test (see annex I).

Also enclosed is a statement by Prime Minister Keating, in his capacity as Chairman of the South Pacific Forum, dated 7 September, on the testing of a nuclear weapon by France (see annex II) and a statement made by the Secretary-General of the South Pacific Forum secretariat, the Hon. Ieremia Tabai, on 6 September on the same subject (see annex III).

I request that the present letter and its three annexes be circulated as a document of the General Assembly under item 70 of the provisional agenda.

(Signed) Richard BUTLER

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ANNEX I

Statement issued by the Prime Minister of Australia, the Hon. P. J. Keating, M.P., on 6 September 1995

THE FIRST FRENCH NUCLEAR TEST

The Australian Government utterly condemns France's nuclear explosion at Mururoa.

By its actions the French Government expresses its contempt for the countries and people of the region, and for all those who hope and work for a nuclear-free world.

Whatever the French Government had in mind by conducting this test, it has done nothing to enhance the honour of France, and has severely damaged its international reputation.

Australia will be protesting in the strongest possible terms to France, and pressing ahead vigorously with our comprehensive programme of action aimed at convincing the French Government to desist from further tests.

I have asked the Minister for Pacific Island Affairs, Mr. Bilney, to convey our protest directly to the French Government during his visit to Paris later this week as leader of the Australian parliamentary delegation on nuclear tests.

As I have said, our protests will not end with the first test. Until the tests stop, we will continue to remind the French Government that with every test they conduct, the good name of France is diminished in this part of the world.

I note reports that President Chirac has suggested that the number of tests at Mururoa may be fewer than originally announced. This apparent response to international protests will not diminish our opposition to each and every nuclear test in the Pacific. We do not want fewer tests: we want no tests.

ANNEX II

Statement issued by the Chairman of the South Pacific Forum, the Prime Minister of Australia, the Hon. P. J. Keating, M.P., on 7 September 1995

TESTING OF A NUCLEAR WEAPON BY FRANCE

As current Chair of the South Pacific Forum, on behalf of my Forum colleagues I condemn the test of a nuclear weapon by France in the South Pacific.

France has defied the wishes of the people of the South Pacific, the appeal by the Asian nations as expressed in the recent Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN) regional forum statement that called on the nuclear-weapon States to bring an immediate end to testing, and the voice of an increasing part of the European and international community. The majority of the French people also oppose France's testing programme in the South Pacific.

Of particular concern to the countries of the South Pacific is the French Government's reluctance fully to address the environmental and health risks posed by the testing.

Forum leaders reiterate the calls made by South Pacific environment ministers in Brisbane on 17 August 1995 for:

(a) An immediate end to testing of nuclear weapons in the South Pacific and the closing of associated facilities, except those required for future environmental monitoring;

(b) France to accept full and exclusive responsibility for any adverse impacts from French testing on the South Pacific environment and people;

(c) France to provide access to the international community to all French scientific data and to the testing sites themselves to enable an independent and comprehensive assessment of the effects of testing.

Forum countries call on the French Government to acknowledge the weight of opinion against nuclear testing and abandon immediately its testing programme in the South Pacific.

Forum leaders will consider nuclear-testing issues as part of the South Pacific Forum meeting at Madang, Papua New Guinea, from 13 to 15 September.

ANNEX III

Statement made by the Secretary-General of the South Pacific Forum secretariat, the Hon. Ieremia Tabai, on 6 September 1995

The Secretary-General of the Forum secretariat, the Hon. Ieremia Tabai, has strongly condemned France's resumption of nuclear testing at Mururoa atoll in the South Pacific.

The Secretary-General was reacting to reports that on 6 September 1995 France conducted the first in the series of nuclear tests announced by President Chirac in June.

In a statement today, Mr. Tabai noted that the region's and the world's vehement opposition to the prospective French tests had been repeatedly made very clear, in the strongest possible terms, since President Chirac's announcement.

"While France's continuing flagrant disregard for international opinion does not come as a surprise, it is certainly a matter of deep disappointment to us", the Secretary-General said.

"Regional leaders will, of course, discuss this latest development at the 26th South Pacific Forum, which convenes at Madang from 13 to 15 September, and I am sure that the region's further responses to France's inexcusable and provocative action will be discussed in greater detail", he said.

The Secretary-General said that France ought to be reminded that the beginning of its test series did not mean the end of the Forum's efforts to prevent testing.

"We will continue to use all possible forums, including the post-Forum dialogue in Port Moresby on 17 and 18 September, and the United Nations General Assembly, to put pressure on both France and China, the only countries currently testing nuclear weapons, to desist from further testing", the Secretary-General said.

"The Forum will not stand by and allow France and China to flout world opinion, disregard their commitments at the Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and jeopardize the negotiation of a truly comprehensive test-ban treaty. We will continue to deplore particularly the way the French use our backyard to test nuclear weapons, putting at risk the Pacific environment, and the health of Pacific peoples, not their own."